

But I also do believe that any time this Congress has an opportunity to hold its ground and essentially embrace and accept the responsibility that the Constitution gives this Congress under article I, we have to do it, whether it's on war funding, when we believe we are right, we have to be able to weather the storm; whether it's on budgets that are going to get vetoed when those budgets reflect the bipartisan consensus in this body that they meet the needs of average people, and that they comply with our obligation to pay our bill as we go.

There is good news, but we also have to acknowledge that there is much more fighting to be done, and that it's time for us in the right circumstances to hold our ground, to be willing to weather the storm of criticism that will come from the White House machine and to stand up for that change and direction that I believe the people of this country voted for in November.

I thank the gentleman from Florida. Mr. KLEIN of Florida. And thank you, Mr. WELCH. It really was very well explained and easy to follow. I think what people in this country respect is the fight. The fight is good, but at the end of the days, results. The President has made it very difficult, unfortunately. He has been unwilling to come out of his corner. A lot of alternatives have been offered on the war, a lot of alternatives have been offered on SCHIP which we are going to talk about in a minute, a lot of alternatives.

As we have talked about already, there have been a lot of accomplishments, student loans, minimum wage, people competing in business. We have had a lot of good things so far which the President has signed, which is good. But there is more to do. We need to get him sort of out of the view that it's him versus the Congress, or his ideology versus the rest of the country. People want consensus. They want solutions.

I would like to turn to Mr. Solution himself here, because Mr. ELLISON from Minnesota has really totally been bringing a lot of consensus on a whole lot of issues, from our foreign policy issues to our domestic issues. I want to bring you into this conversation and please add some value to it.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Congressman KLEIN. Whether it be from Colorado to Vermont, from Kentucky to Tennessee, to Minnesota, to Florida, no matter where we come from, this freshman class that we belong to is here to stay and here to say, very clearly, that we are reclaiming the coequal branch of this legislative body in our constitutional framework. We don't have another branch of government which we take orders from. We don't have to prove patriotism by servile behavior towards the executive branch. We stand up with doing our constitutional responsibility, and our only boss is the American people, not the President, not the courts.

Article I states, all legislative power herein granted shall be vested in the Congress of the United States. Part of that power is, of course, passing laws and, of course, all of you, my fine colleagues, have made it clear that we have been productive, we have been busy, we have been putting up the fight, and we have been passing legislation that this President should sign and, in fact, in many cases has signed. But we have also done something else which I am proud of, and that is provided oversight. We have subpoenaed people and made them come to these hearings. We have asked people the questions, the tough questions, and made them give forth the right answer.

Why, on the Judiciary Committee just this week, we had Mr. TANNER, who is the section chief of the voting section. He offered the opinion that, actually I wish I had it written down, because I don't want to get it wrong, but he offered the opinion that voter ID bills may affect seniors because they live longer, but when it comes to minority seniors they die, so it doesn't really matter for them. Chairman CONYERS issued that request for him to come to that committee, and we asked him questions about voting rights. We asked him about how that department was being run. We asked him the tough questions that Americans expect us to ask.

But that's not all. Chairman NADLER of the committee has had constitutional hearings, and we have had people come in and talk about important issues, and, of course, Representative COHEN has been there as well, on Guantanamo, on habeas corpus. These are the kinds of things that Americans are concerned about because America will never be a place where we give up on our constitutional protections and our civil liberties.

I just want to say that I am so proud to be a Member of this freshman class that is not only passing legislation, not only standing up for its right as a coequal branch of government, but is calling people on the carpet and asking the tough questions as it is our job to do. The American people expect us to say, What's going on? Tell us what's going on. What have you done? Why have you done it?

That is our job, and we will continue to do it, because we don't work for anybody but for the American people. Not the judiciary. Not the executive branch. We are enshrined in article I of the Constitution, coequal branch of government, that branch of government in which all vested power to legislate is inside of us.

Mr. KLEIN, I want to thank you for conducting yet another excellent freshman hour.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Thank you, Mr. ELLISON.

Just to follow up on the point, a number of our colleagues have been talking about the idea of oversight and accountability. Well, the simple answer is not just for the exercise of

bringing people in by subpoena or asking them to come in and talk, it's to learn from your mistakes.

It's a very simple principle. What do we teach our children? Learn from your mistakes. What do you do in business? You want to learn from your mistakes. That, of course, is what the whole purpose of this is. If we see something has gone wrong, accountability, some bad business practices that the government is involved with or paid for something they shouldn't have paid for, let's not let it happen again. That's the simple bottom line.

I would like to shift, because many of our Members are interested—thank you, Mr. HODES, otherwise known as Vanna White—Mr. HODES is holding up a little poster here which talks about the children's SCHIP plan. The SCHIP plan, as I think everyone is now familiar with, or many people are in our country, or certainly Members of Congress are, it's about making sure that children, low-income children can participate in a health care plan that's private health insurance.

It makes the parents pay on a sliding scale what they can afford. It leverages tax dollars. It does everything it's supposed to do. Our business community back home in my area loves it. It's very popular because instead of kids going to the emergency room, they are going where they should go, and that is to get doctor and preventative health care.

We have had a bipartisan plan that has now been passed twice out of this chamber, and the President vetoed it one time, and I guess he is going to veto it again, but bipartisan, Democrats and Republicans coming together, not everybody, but all the Democrats, I think, just about all, and many Republicans.

In the Senate, I think the Republicans are the ones who helped draft this. It really brings it together. A quick little fun thing on Halloween here, it talks about the trick-or-treat and the Republican plan, we are just sort of joking around a little bit, but we are calling it the trick, and the bipartisan plan the treat.

The Republican plan, which we are calling the trick, covers 8.3 million children. The treat, the plan that most of us are pushing, Democrats and Republicans, covers 10 million. This is an additional number of children that we believe are part of this plan that we want to get covered.

The targeting of low-income kids, in the Republican plan it targets fewer lowest-income children. In the Democratic plan, the one we just passed, it enrolls the lowest-income kids first, a goal that we all want to make sure that we are covering.

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And of course there is a cigarette tax in both plans, the exact same cigarette tax to pay for it. The question though is, if the same amount of money is being raised, why are we covering 10